

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Amendment to the Specification

The specification has been amended to correct a minor typographical error on page 11, line 5.

Claim Status and Amendment to the Claims

Claims 1-16, 18-21, 24 and 27-42 are now pending.

The Examiner is thanked for his kind allowance of claims 1-16, 18-21, and 24.

The Examiner is also thanked for his kind finding of allowable subject matter in claims 27 and 42 if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 27 has been amended into independent form in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion.

Claims 28, 33, 38, and 42 have been amended such that they depend from allowable claim 27, which also makes claims 29-32, 34-37, and 39-41 indirectly depend from claim 27.

Claims 17, 22-23 and 25-26 have been cancelled, without prejudice.

Applicants respectfully reserve all rights to pursue the cancelled claims through a continuation application.

The 35 U.S.C. §102 Rejection

Independent claims 17, 22, 23, 25, and 26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by Yamauchi et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,088,507).

All of the rejected claims have been cancelled, without prejudice. With this amendment, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claims based on Yamaguchi be withdrawn, and it is respectfully asserted that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

The 35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection

Claims 28-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Yamauchi in view of Nakai (U.S. Pat. No. 5,999,698). Claims 33-41 also stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Yamauchi in view of Bilbrey et al. (U.S. Pat. No. [5,227,863]).

Claims 28-42, as amended, directly or indirectly depend from claim 27, and thus include the limitations of claim 27 which is now allowable as amended. The base claim being allowable, the dependent claims must also be allowable at least for the same reasons. In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully asserted that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

Request for Allowance

It is believed that this Amendment places the above-identified patent application into condition for allowance. Early favorable consideration of this Amendment is earnestly solicited.

Request for Entry of Amendment

Entry of this Amendment will place the Application either in condition for allowance. The present amendment is either in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion in the Final Office Action or only concerned with correction of a minor typographical error in the specification and formality of the claims as explained above, and thus the amendment neither raises a new issue nor requires a new search. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment is appropriate and is respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner is thanked for the kind allowance of claims 1-16, 18-21, and 24, and kind finding of allowable subject matter in claims 27 and 42. Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action. However, Applicants point out that the reasons for allowability of the above referenced claims are not limited to the reasons for allowance as set forth in the Office Action, and that additional reasons for allowability may exist, each of which may be independently sufficient to establish the patentability of one or more pending claims.

Applicants respectfully reserve the right to introduce, articulate, or otherwise comment on any such additional reasons for allowance as may be appropriate in any future proceedings concerning the claimed invention.

Appl. No.: 09/458,109
Amdt. dated: February 18, 2004
Reply to Final Office Action of November 19, 2003

Docket No. CT-317
(031614-000106)

If, in the opinion of the Examiner, an interview would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees which may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account Number 50-1698.

Respectfully submitted,
THELEN REID & PRIEST, LLP

Dated: February 18, 2004



Masako Ando
Limited Recognition under 37 CFR §10.9(b)

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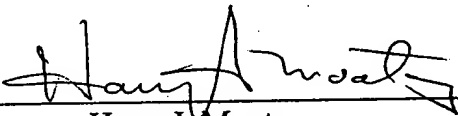
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Technology Center 2600

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Expires: August 27, 2004



Harry I. Moatz
Director of Enrollment and Discipline

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